

Statement of Governor Haley Barbour on Being Named
Nation's Most Outstanding Governor by Governing Magazine

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

It is a great honor to be chosen the Nation's Governor of the year, and I am grateful to Governing Magazine for this award.

But Marsha and I believe this is really a tribute to the people of Mississippi, whose strength, character, and spirit shown through so brightly as our state bore the brunt of the worst natural disaster in American history.

So I accept this on behalf of those citizens and in recognition of their extraordinary courage and selflessness.

I accept it with gratitude for our magnificent first responders, who put service before self despite unbelievable obstacles and personal losses; and with admiration for our local officials, who never lost unity of command or continuity of purpose even in the face of utter devastation.

We often say our government employees are the state's most important resource. Katrina affirmed that statement with a bold explanation point. In the face of obliteration on an unprecedented scale, Mississippi state employees were incredible public servants. Operating out of parking lots in the backs of automobiles, they did whatever it took to make sure their constituents got food or had their medicine or later that they were signed up for disaster unemployment assistance. These people saved lives, stopped looters, cleared roads and so much more.

No governor could be as happy as I to accept this honor on behalf of such people.

We governors, like other chief executives, often do not know what problems we will face. My campaign focused on job creation, tort reform, education, workforce development and the budget: returning to an honestly balanced budget without raising anybody's taxes. Marsha and I never dreamed of Katrina with all its wrath.

But you do what you have to do. Like those strong, resilient, self-reliant people in south Mississippi; we didn't look for someone to blame; we didn't whine or mope. Mississippians aren't into victimhood.

No, after the storm we got back up, hitched up our britches and went to work, helping ourselves and helping our neighbors.

Working together, we searched and rescued; we cleaned up and recovered. Now we're rebuilding.

We've had a lot of help from the Bush Administration and Congress. We're especially grateful to Sen. Cochran and Sen. Lott and our Congressional Delegation. Our sister states were tremendous; an outpouring of private philanthropy and volunteers was enormous. The faith-based groups, the churches; they're still coming.

With that help and because of the character and spirit of the strong people of Mississippi, our Coast will come back bigger and better than ever. We've already started and your honoring our state with the prestigious recognition of achievement is a fitting tribute to Mississippi and its people. Thank you.